

SUB-CABINET ON SENIOR VITAL LIVING
Meeting Summary Notes
Wednesday, September 19, 2012

Subcabinet Members

Adams, Bruce
Adler, Joe
Ahluwalia, Uma
Albornoz, Gabe
Bowers, Richard
Nelson, Rick
Silverman, Steve
Vaughan-Prather, Judith
Voss, Chris

Staff

Biggins, Carolyn
Bowers, Richie
Boyd, Ian
Brunetto, Odile
Crichton, Elisabeth
Davis, Betsy
Greene, Jay
Gunod-Greene, Gail
Heiney-Gonzalez, Joe

Guests

Aviv, Pazit
Balkovich, Joanne
Binder, Elaine
Greenhut, Mike
Marks, Leslie
Kauffman, Charles
Pavlin, Dick
Welles, Judith
Zeidman, Beth

Uma Ahluwalia convened the meeting with introductions.

Updates

Fire Chief Bowers reported that most 911 calls and response by Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) are for trips, slips and falls. The County Executive and other partners are working together to explore what needs to be done to decrease this problem. In addition, the last fire deaths in Montgomery County were seniors. The three contributing factors were smoking and/or cooking, no working smoke detectors, and hoarding

In 1976 County Council, passed a law that every family structure must have a working smoke detector. FRS reports that 50% of the homes visited in Montgomery County do not have working smoke detectors per recent Saturday home visits conducted by FRS personnel. The reasons for this problem are:

1. Residents have smoke detector but the battery is not working
2. Smoke detector non functioning because has 10-year shelf life
3. Many take batteries out because the detector goes off while cooking

FRS canvasses neighborhoods every Saturday checking homes, distributing and installing free smoke detectors. Any resident can call 311 to schedule a free visit from FRS and to receive a smoke detector. "Call 311 before you need to call 911."

Announcement and Congratulations to new Senior Fellows:

Leslie Marks—Housing Senior Fellow with the Department of Housing and Community Affairs
Elane Binder—Transportation Senior Fellow with the Montgomery County Council

Task Force on Hoarding Behavior Activities

Bonnie Klem, Program Manager, Adult Protective Services and Sybil Greenhut, Program Manager, Senior Mental Health gave a presentation on the Task Force on Hoarding Behavior (TFHB). The TFHB was formed in September 2009 as a collaborative endeavor to:

- Share information, expertise and resources to better address the complexity of hoarding situations
- Develop a concerted and coordinated multi-agency intervention strategy

Bonnie and Sybil first gave the definition of hoarding as an acquisition of, and failure to discard a large number of possessions in a residence, which appear to be useless, or of limited value. Living spaces, furniture, appliance and utilities are sufficiently cluttered as to prevent their intended use, which could pose a significant risk to health, safety or the maintenance of house. The physical dangers of hoarding vary from fractured ankles due to tripping over objects to house fires where FRS cannot enter the home or emergency personnel are endangered due to amount of items increasing the intensity of the fire.

The TFHB began conversations and collaboration between departments. For example, Adult Protective Services and Building Code Enforcement began to work together on this problem by sharing data and making referrals. Dr. Roger Peele of Behavioral Health and Crisis Services is working to get the diagnosis of “Hoarding” on the DSM-IV Diagnoses and Codes. Treatment of the disorder is reimbursable now only under the billing category of dystymia or depression for persons with those additional diagnoses.

Question—How can we distribute information out to the senior community so they know about the resources provided by the TFHB?

Suggestions:

- Contact areas such as Bethesda, Olney, Gaithersburg, Rockville, and Takoma Park who have developed senior villages’ concepts and are providing education to their senior residents. Have information on the activities of the TFHB added to their education programs.
- Contact the Regional Service Centers and organization like NOVA and have TFHB information added to their newsletters.

Diverse seniors’ data review and discussion – Several summary reports were distributed. The following Senior Sub-cabinet members gave highlights from the reports:

Ralph Vines reported for the Safety Workgroup and shared that 85-88% of the seniors surveyed said that Montgomery County is a nice place to live. The problems reported were identity theft and scams (11% reporting). The source of most of the scams to seniors were “contractors” knocking at their door offering to do work on the roof, driveway, etc. There is a need to educate seniors not to trust strangers at their doors.

Betsy Davis reported that data on age is not collected from 911 calls but the Police have a record management system that is able to perform a query. Eighty-Two percent reported that they felt safe in the county (71% left the question blank). Betsy reiterated that the “contractors” coming to the door is a problem that is compounded by seniors being embarrassed and not reporting fraud incidences to family members or the police.

Chris Voss reported that the alerts on “smart” phones are being utilized to provide emergency alerts from severe weather to evacuations. Residents can sign up at Alert Montgomery to receive text message. Seniors do not prefer text messages (78% reporting) so a voicemail messages alert system is being tested for possible future deployment. Soon 100% of “smart” phones will have the ability to receive emergency alerts with the choice for users to “opt out” with the exception of Presidential Alerts.

Gabe Albonoz reported that the Recreation Department is implementing a plan that will enable the department to capture demographic analysis.

Jay Kenney gave highlights from the handout that DHHS distributed. One highlight was that even though 12.5% of the senior population in Montgomery County is Asian/Pacific Islander 42% participate in the Maryland Department on Aging funded programs, notably the Senior Nutrition Program (SNP). The reason for the high percentage participating in the SNP was that the Chinese community is very active in doing outreach and promoting the nutrition program to their seniors. Another highlight was that there were only 6.9% seniors surveyed to be Hispanic/Latino but 21% of all seniors served by Aging and Disability Resource Unit (ADRU) are Hispanic seniors. The reason for this is that the ADRU has Spanish-speaking client assistant workers that the Hispanic community knows and contacts.

Comments about highlights and reports:

Leslie Marks commented that having multiple languages at call centers such as the ADRU helps to reach the diverse senior population and it was good to know that people know where to call.

Gabe Albonoz shared that after he was interviewed on a Spanish radio program, lines of people showed up at the recreations centers to take advantage of programs.

The comments were made that there is still inequality in numbers and we must advocate harder and search deeper for the reasons why. The upcoming Diversity Summit called by Mr. Leggett will explore these problems and provide reasonable next steps.

Ian Boyd commented that in the fall, departments are due for their annual performance review as part of CountyStat. The review could look at demographics with reference to seniors. An example, when looking at pedestrian safety, instead of just looking at location and visibility, how does age factors into the incidences. Was the driver or pedestrian a senior? Are demographics showing seniors to be a vulnerable population when it comes to pedestrian safety?

Next meeting Wednesday, December 12.

Meeting adjourned.